The Labor Party in America, by Leon Trotsky

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Pseudonyms:
Crux: Leon Trotsky *(QUOTED UNDERLINED)*
JPC: James P. Cannon, SWP leader
VRD: Vincent Dunne, veteran Trotskyist unionist, Minneapolis
SH: Max Schachtman, SWP leader

BOLD by Ross Dowson: *(**annotations)** next to Trotsky's comments)*

Inside Cover: Introduction: " ...It is our hope that this compilation may assist militants to a better understanding of the need of the American labor movement to cut loose from the paralyzing two-party system maintained by Wall Street and enter the road of independent political actions" **-but not reformist**

Page 1: **Point 1**: Trotsky: " What was my idea about the 'labor party' ... not of a 'labor party'in the specific English sense .... but in the general European sense.." **-party of the trade unions, party of the working class**

Page 2: '***NB*** But that eventuality which appears to me to be very **problematical** (that the American trade union bureaucracy will be forced ... to imitate the British trade union bureaucracy in creating a kind of party based on the trade unions)

Point 3: "...a Marxist .... cannot present himself before the working class with two banners.... I have tickets for a first class party and other tickets cheaper for the stupid ones..." **Very very good**.

Point 4: ...**by whom and why was the CCF and then NDP formed(? S. Smith (CPC 'theoretician') claimed CCF formed to block the CP but it was obviously a continuation of the populist movement out of bourgeois control** (An) important tradition of independent political action by the working class (as Chartism in England, for example)" **this and the British Labour Party became part of the tradition of the Canadian workers (see**

Lipton's 'Agrarian Socialism.')

Page 4: Point 7: **Exactly the NDP** "....it is evident that the possibility of participating in and of utilizing a 'labor party' movement would be greater in the period of its inception, that is, in the period when the party is not a party but an amorphic political mass movement. **(Trotsky**: That we must participate in it at that time and with the greatest energy is without question, but not to help form a" labor party' which will exclude us and fight against us but to push the progressive elements of the movement more and more to the left by our activity and propaganda. I know this seems too simple for the new great school which searches in every way for a method to jump over its feeble head.'

Point 8: ***NB*** *(On the nature of single-issue united fronts vs the permanent labor party, and on the necessity of independent spirit of communists*: **hear hear Pat Jordan & ET** (*British comrades)*

Page 5: Point 10*:* ***NB*** " ...the labor party (is) not 'our' party but as an arena in which we are acting as an absolutely independent communist Party.

Page 12: ..." Are we in favour of a reforjmist labor party. No**.** Are we kin favour of a policy which can give to the trade unions the possibility to put its weight upon the balance of forces? Yes. It can become a reformist party ... here comes the question of program ... we must have a program of transitional demands ...for workers' control of industry through the factory committees ... we can become the champions of this movement but on the basis of a concrete program of demands. *(including)* workers' *(defence)* militia, workers' control of production These demands are transitory because they lead from the capitalist society to the proletarian revolution ... we cant stop only with the day-to-day demands of the proletariat. We must give to the most backward workers some concrete slogan that corresponds to their needs and that leads dialectally to the conquest of power.

Page 18: Trotskys reply to Schachtman: (what is the timetable - "is it possible American workers will conquer power in ten years? I will say yes, absolutely possible.... Naturally our advancing slogans depends upon the reaction we meet in the masses. We under-estimate the revolutionary movement in the working masses. We are a small organization, propagandistic, and in such situations are more sceptical than the masses...")

Page 23: Trotsky: *(outlines the various types of development of the workers' political movement -* ***"NB")***

Page 29: Trotsky : "Before finishing - a correction in the formulation of the question: The labor party proposal is not a part of the program of transitional demands but is a special motion"

Page 37: Trotsky: "I believe that the most fighting elements in the trade unions should be our youth, who should not oppose our movement to the labor party but go inside the labor party, even a very opportunist labor party. They must be inside. That is their duty. That our young comrades separate the transitional program from the labor party is understandable because the transitional program is an international question, but for the United States they are connected - both questions - and I believe that some of our young comrades accept the transitional program without good understanding of its meaning, for otherwise the formal separation **(*of the labor party slogan from other demands - R.D. comment*)** of it would lose for them all importance. "

(end)

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1963?

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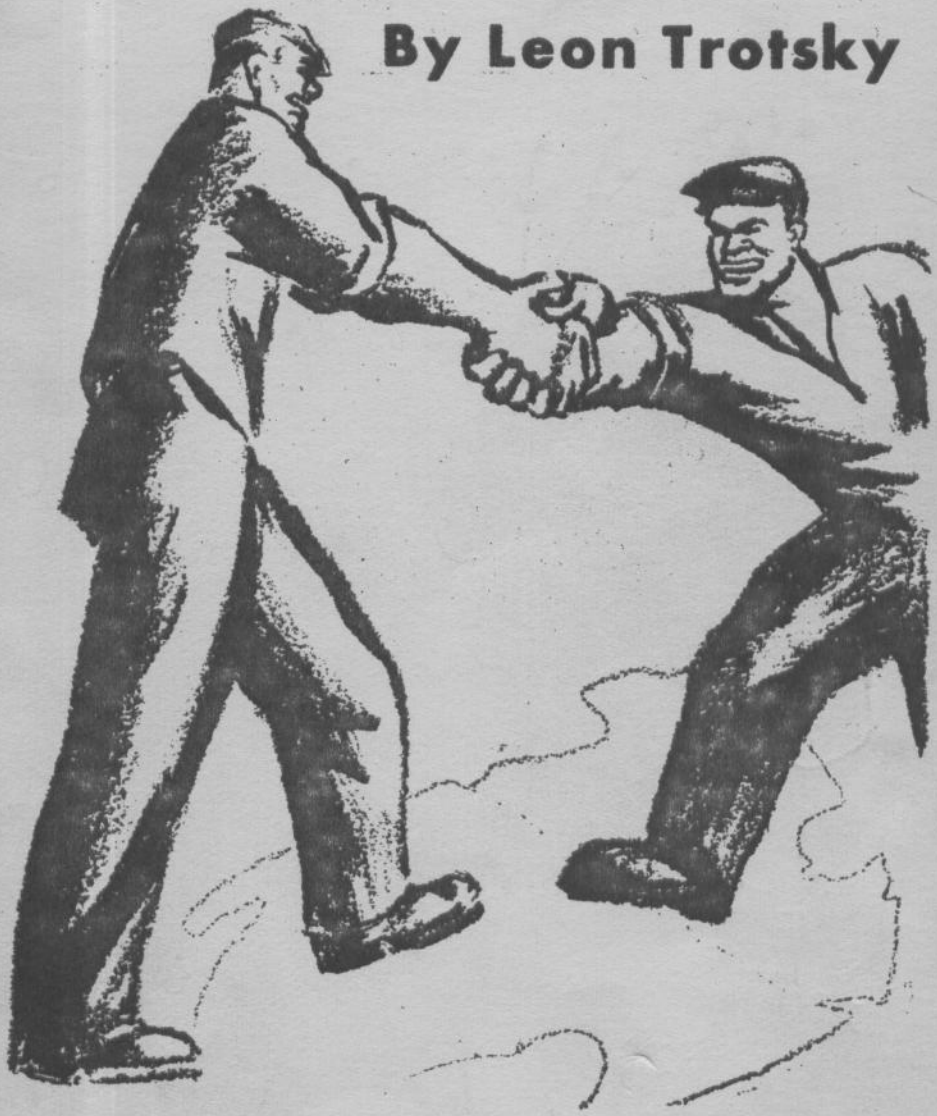
By Leon Trotsky



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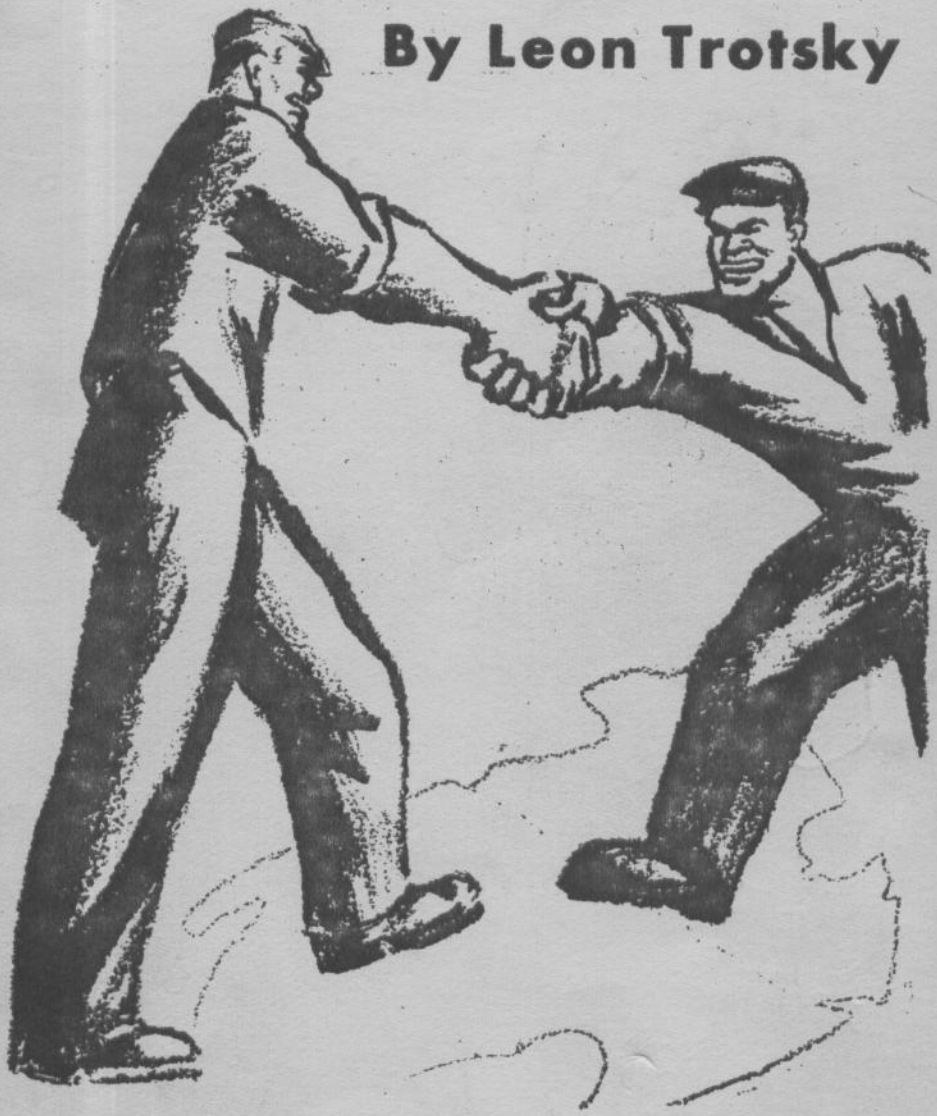

This pamphlet contains a compilation of Leon Trotsky's remarks on the problem of the labor party in America. The Internal Bulletins of the US Socialist Workers Party in which almost all of this material originally appeared have long been out of print. Consequently what Trotsky had to say on this vital question is not easily available today.

It should be noted that the bulk of the material consists of stenograms of conversations with Crux (Trotsky's pen name) which were not edited or corrected by the participants. In some places the stenographer recorded only the gist of the conversation. In other places there are gaps. On top of this, Trotsky spoke not in his native Russian but in English, a language that gave him some difficulty. For these reasons the views of the participants are not represented with programmatic precision or completeness. However, if allowance is made for these deficiencies, the stenograms do constitute an accurate representation of Trotsky's thoughts on the problem of the labor party.

It is our hope that this compilation may assist militants to a better understanding of the need of the American labor movement to cut loose from the paralyzing two-party system maintained by Wall Street and enter the road of independent political action.

(From the US Editorial Note)

On The Labor Party Question In America

I reread the theses of the Second Conference of the American League concerning the question of the labor party. I find it excellent in every part and I sign it with both hands. I find it necessary to emphasize my full agreement with those theses, all the more as my interview to the New York Times of March 1932 gave rise to the misunderstanding and misinterpretation, especially from the part of the Lovestone group.

1. What was my idea about the "labor party" in that statement? I affirmed that American politics will be Europeanized in the sense that the inevitable and imminent development of a party of the working class will totally change the political face of the US. This is a commonplace for a Marxist. The question was not of a "labor party" in the specific English sense of that word but in the general European sense without designating what form such a party would take or what phases it would pass through. There was not the slightest necessity in this interview to enter into the internal tactical differences within the Communist ranks. The translation of my interview from the Russian text which employs the words "Rabochaya partia" into the English was defective in that it permitted one to get a concrete and specific interpretation of what should have been general.

2. One can declare that even the general term "party of the working class" does not exclude a "labor party" in the English sense. Be that as it may. However, such an eventuality has nothing to do with a precise tactical question. We can admit hypothetically that the American trade union bureaucracy will be forced in certain historical conditions, to imitate the British trade union bureaucracy in creating a kind of party based upon the trade unions. But that eventuality which app-

ears to me to be very problematical, does not constitute an aim for which the Communists must strive and on which one must concentrate the attention of the proletarian vanguard.

3. A long period of confusion in the Comintern led many people to forget a very simple but absolutely irrevocable principle that a Marxist, a proletarian revolutionist, can not present himself before the working class with two banners. He can not say at a workers meeting: I have tickets for a first class party and other tickets cheaper for the stupid ones. If I am a Communist I must fight for the Communist Party.

4. One can affirm that under the American conditions a "labor party" in the British sense would be a progressive step and by recognizing this and stating so we ourselves, even though indirectly, help to establish such a party. But that is precisely the reason I will never assume the responsibility to affirm abstractly and dogmatically that the creation of a "labor party" would be a "progressive step" even in the United States because I do not know under what circumstances, under what guidance, and for what purposes that party would be created. It seems to me more probable that especially in America which does not possess any important tradition of independent political action by the working class (as Chartism in England, for example) and where the trade union bureaucracy is more reactionary and corrupted than it was in the height of the British Empire, the creation of a "labor party" in America could be provoked only by a mighty revolutionary pressure of the working masses and by the growing threat of Communism. It is absolutely clear that under these conditions the labor party would signify not a progressive step but a hindrance to the progressive evolution of the working class.

5. In what form the party of the working class will become a genuine mass party in the United States in the immediate future we can not prophesy

because the Socialist and "labor" parties are very different in different countries even in Europe. In Belgium, for example, we see an intermediary sort of party arise. Certainly the phases of development of the proletarian party in America will be sui generis(unique).We can only affirm with the greatest assurance: especially since the US, in the period from 1921 to 1924 has had already an important rehearsal in the creation of a "labor" or "farmer-labor" party a resurrection of a similar movement can not be a simple repetition of that experience but a far more pregnant and more crystallized movement, i.e. - either under the guidance of the revolutionary Communist Party or under the guidance of reformist elements against the growing Communist Party. And if even in 1921-1924 the Communist Party did not find great possibilities for independent action inside the organization of an inchoate "labor party" it would have less possibility in the new phase of an analogous movement.

6. One can imagine that the trade union bureaucracy and its Socialist and left democratic advisers may show themselves to be more perspicacious and begin the formation of a "labor party" before the revolutionary movement becomes too threatening. In view of the groping empiricism and provincial narrowness of the American labor bureaucracy and aristocracy of labor such perspicacity seems very improbable. The failure of such an attempt in the past shows us that the bureaucracy, so tenacious in its immediate aims, is absolutely incapable of a systematic political action on a great scale even in the interest of capitalist society. The bureaucracy must receive a rap on the head for such a "radical" initiative. However, if the creation of a "labor party" would prevent, in a certain period, the large success of Communism, our elementary duty must be not to proclaim the progressiveness of the "labor party" but its insufficiency, ambiguity, and limitedness and its historical role as a hindrance to the proletarian revolution.

(7) Must we join that "labor party" or remain outside? This is no more a question of principle but of circumstances and possibilities. The question itself has arisen from the experience of the British Communists and the "labor party" and that experience has served far more the "labor party" than the Communists. It is evident that the possibility of participating in and of utilizing a "labor party" movement would be greater in the period of its inception; that is, in the period when the party is not a party but an amorphic political mass movement. That we must participate in it at that time and with the greatest energy is without question, but not to help form a "labor party" which will exclude us and fight against us but to push the progressive elements of the movement more and more to the left by our activity and propaganda. I know this seems too simple for the new great school which searches in every way for a method to jump over its feeble head.

8. To consider a "labor party" as an integrated series of united fronts signifies a misunderstanding of the notions both of united fronts and of the party. The united front is determined by concrete circumstances and for concrete aims. The party is permanent. By a united front we reserve for ourselves a free hand to break with our temporary allies. In a common party with these allies we are bound by discipline and even by the fact of the party itself. The experience of the Kuomingtang and of the Anglo-Russian Committee must be well understood. The strategic line dictated by the lack of spirit of independence of the Communist Party and by the desire to enter into the "big" party (Kuomingtang, "labor party") produced inevitably all the consequences of opportunistic adaptation to the will of the allies and through them to the enemies. We must educate our cadres in the belief in the invincibility of the Communist idea and in the future of the Communist Party. The parallel struggle for another party produces inevitably in their minds a duality and drives them on the road of opportunism.

9. The policy of the united front has not only its great advantages but its limits and its dangers. The united front even in the form of temporary blocs often impels one to opportunistic deviations frequently fatal as for example Brandler in 1923. That danger becomes absolutely overwhelming in a situation when the so-called Communist Party becomes a part of a "labor party" created by the grace of the propaganda and action of the Communist Party itself.

10. That the labor party can become an arena of our successful struggle and that the labor party created as a barrier to Communism can, under certain circumstances, strengthen the Communist Party is true but only under the condition that we consider the labor party not as "our" party but as an arena in which we are acting as an absolutely independent Communist Party.

11. All the resolutions about the British Labor Party must be taken into consideration not as they were written before the experiences of the Comintern and the British Communist Party in that regard, but in the light of that experience. The attempt mechanically to apply them now in 1932 to the American conditions is characteristic of the epigones' mind and has nothing to do with Marxism and Leninism.

12. It is not necessary to say that the idea of a Farmer-Labor Party is a treacherous mockery of Marxism.

Leon Trotsky, May 19 1932.

Labor Party Discussion

JPC: The subject today is the labor party, in three aspects: 1) our general principled position; 2) the development of the Non-Partisan Labor League, that is, the CIO political movement in the trade unions which shows in some respects tenden-

cies to independent political action, toward the constitution of a party, in other places like New York half such tendencies, labor candidates locally, support of Republican-Fusion and support of Roosevelt nationally, in other parts they endorse all capitalist candidates, mainly through the Democratic Party. 3) The question arises should our comrades in the trade unions we control join the NPLL, what should we do in unions where we have a small minority; should we become the champions of the NPLL or shall we stand aside in a critical attitude? We do not have a final policy in in New Jersey, for example, we are experimenting-- we had the unions join the NPLL and there support a motion for the formation of a party. In other parts of the country we haven't done so. How should we conduct ourselves in a more or less developed labor party as in Minneapolis?

In principle it appears that we should condemn the whole movement and stand aside but that is not a very fruitful policy. In Minneapolis there is a fully constituted independent organization, the Farmer-Labor Party. It runs its own candidates in the State and nationally it supports Roosevelt.

The Stalinists who have been driven out of the trade unions have penetrated deeply into the Farmer-Labor Association -- this constitutes a weapon against us in the unions. The policy there now is the policy of a bloc of the Trotskyist unions with what they call the "real farmer-laborites", that is reformists who believe in the FLP and don't wish the Stalinists to control it. How far can we carry such a bloc --how can can we fight for just organizational control? But if our people stand aside, the Stalinists get control. On the other hand, if we fight really energetically as we do in the unions we become champions of the FLP. It is not a simple question --it's very easy for people to get lost in the reformist policy.

VRD: First, I would say that the Stalinists in controlling the apparatus of the FLP control more than just the apparatus -- they make it difficult for us in the unions. By our not participating in

this party through our trade union connections it allows the Stalinists and the more reactionary elements in the FLP to have a weapon against us in the labor movement. We have a definite policy insofar as our work in the trade unions is concerned. Our comrades speaking in favor of the FLP have done so very critically, advising the unions that they can use it only to a certain extent --we have succeeded in keeping our policy clear from the reformists but, as Comrade Cannon says, it's difficult to say how far we should go in this direction; we can not take the responsibility for the labor party and yet we would have that responsibility thrust on us by the workers who believe we can as efficiently fight there for their members as we do in the trade unions. Thus far even the Stalinists' drive against us has not been able to shake them yet. The Stalinists, together with a wide section of the progressives, intellectuals are at one in turning the labor party more and more into a bloc with the democrat and liberal candidates. Inside the FLP the Stalinists are trying to keep control by setting up a formal discipline in the FLP, mainly against us. We have fought that, demanding democracy in the labor party and we have been successful. We haven't been at all successful in preventing a closer bloc with the Democratic Party. We can't yet ask the unions to support the SWP as against the FLP.

JPC: In St. Paul where the FLP made a deal to support a capitalist candidate for mayor, we put up our own candidate.

Crux: Can you explain to me how was it possible that though the Stalinists control an important section of this party they passed a resolution against fascists and communists?

VRD: That was done in one region. In certain sections we have farmer-laborites who work with us --they were in control of this district as against the Stalinists-- we have some comrades there --we tried to shape this resolution in a different way

but we were not on the resolutions committee--- late at night the resolution was jammed through.

Crux: The resolution can be used also against us. How is the party constructed? It is based not only upon trade unions but also upon other organizations because they are progressives, intellectuals, etc. Do they admit every individual, or only collectively?

VRD: The FLP is based upon workers' economic organizations, trade unions, cooperatives, etc., farmers' cooperative organizations, also upon territorial units, township clubs, etc. It also allows for the affiliation of cultural organizations, sick and death benefit organizations, etc., also through ward clubs. The Stalinists and intellectuals join through these clubs; they have more control than the drivers' local of 4000 members. We are fighting against that --we are demanding that the trade unions be given their real representation-- we have the support of the trade unions on this.

Crux: Can you tell me what are the nuances of opinion among our leading comrades on this question --approximately.

JPC: There are nuances of opinion not only among the leadership but also in the ranks. Problems arise in the trade unions especially. A motion is proposed in the unions to join the NPLL. The sentiment especially in CIO unions for this is overwhelming. I think that our policy in New Jersey, that at least in this union we must not oppose joining the NPLL will have to be adopted. There is also a tendency in the Party that in this NPLL we shall press for the formation of the labor party. I venture to say that the trade union comrades would be most satisfied if they could have that decision. But they haven't yet faced the difficulties. The dilemma is that you become the champions of the FLP by having an aggressive policy. We even have one comrade on the State Executive Committee

of the FLP in New Jersey. The bureaucrats are putting off the date for formation of the FLP. The policy of Lewis, Hillman is to leave that aside till 1940. If our comrade would make an energetic fight, if he could be sincere in advocating the FLP, he could muster quite an opposition against the bureaucrats. But then the dilemma is that we are championing the creation of an FLP which we oppose.

In our Plenum there will be differences of opinion--there will be a tendency to become energetic fighters for the constitution of a labor party. My opinion is that this is the prevailing sentiment of the Party --to join the NPLL and become aggressive fighters for the constitution of a labor party as against the policy of endorsing capitalist candidates; if we can do that without compromising our principled position that would be best in the sense of gaining influence. We don't say anything practical to the workers who are ready to take one step forward. The CP now is not championing the labor party; they are a Roosevelt Party. The bureaucrats in the trade unions are also blocking the strong movement within the workers for a labor party.

SH: I wouldn't say that the labor party sentiment is so strong among the workers today. Most of the labor party sentiment that might have arisen has been canalized toward the chanrel of Roosevelt. We had a formidable crisis and yet the only thing that came out of it is the hybrid form of labor party in New York. In any case if you compare 1930 with 1924 you can say there is barely a labor party movement now; then there was more real sentiment in the trade unions. I think that if we don't have a clear idea for the prospects of a labor party, that we will make some big political mistakes. I believe a big change is taking place --a breaking-up of the old parties. The biggest political party, the Democratic Party which has a support of 90% of the workers and farmers is going through a split almost before our eyes. In Congress the fight is not between Republicans and Dem-

ccrats but between one section of the Democrats and another. There is very good reason to believe that in the 1940 election we will have a new political setup with the old line Republicans fused with the Democrats of the South, and the other, the New Deal Democrats, Roosevelt followers plus the CIO, Lewis; that will be powerful enough even to take the bulk of the AFL along. It is precisely this prospect that keeps Lewis, Hillman from championing a labor party -- they are looking for the split in the Democratic Party in which they will be able to play a considerable role. That is why I don't think there will be a real, serious, substantial progress in the NPLL movement toward an independent labor party.

It is true that our position is rather a difficult one but we have had considerable amount of experience with labor party movements --a generalization may be helped by reference to our Minneapolis situation -- I don't think our growth is due to participation in the FLP movement but through our activities in the trade unions. Nevertheless, as we grow we necessarily must participate in FLP politics and I can't say I'm entirely satisfied with the situation there. I can't say we have proposed any other line of conduct. In effect in Minneapolis we are in a bloc with so-called honest reformists --who are scoundrels on their own account -- who are in a bloc with the Democrats, is directed almost exclusively against the Stalinists and against a mechanical control the Stalinists have of the FLP. In action we are indistinguishable from the so-called honest reformists. We are distinguished from the Stalinists but only insofar as we are in a bloc with real reformists who vote for the FLP ticket in the State and for the Democrats nationally.

If we are to follow out such a policy of being against endorsing capitalist candidates in favor of FLP candidates seriously, systematically, effectively, I can't see how we can avoid becoming the champions of a labor party, of taking the initiative; wherever a labor party does not exist to form one. Unless all signs prove untrue, these

labor parties will be a working appendage of Roosevelt just as was the case in the New York American Labor Party supporting Roosevelt nationally, and on a local scale supporting Republican Fusion. Once that's begun I don't see clearly how we will avoid the consequences of a policy that was followed in 1924 when we were in the CP, with the added complication that the Stalinist Party is in the unions and while it's true that they are a Roosevelt Party, still in the unions they advocate formation of a labor party.

JPC: Not much. I would say that the Stalinists in the first period of the Peoples Front had the slogan "Organize the labor party as the American Peoples' Front" but now it's only a ceremonial action. At this point they are even against a premature splitting of the Democratic Party. It is not true that the sentiment now is less than in 1924 for a labor party. Then it had no basis in the unions; it was mostly a farmers' movement. Now the movement is dominated by the CIO unions. It is not the old Gompers politics. The unions are regimented politically; the sentiment in the ranks for their own party is quite strong. The NPLL is not going out to meet the sentiment of the workers. The policy of Lewis and the bureaucrats is experimental; if the workers will clamor more, they will make concessions to that sentiment. It is a step higher than the Gompers policy.

(Stenographer's note: More argument about the relative strength of labor party sentiment in 1922-1924 now took place between Comrades JPC and VRD on one side and SH on the other.)

Crux: This question is very important and very complicated. When for the first time the League considered this question, some seven-eight years ago--whether we should favor a labor party or not, whether we should develop initiative on this score, then the prevailing sentiment was not to do it and that was absolutely correct. The perspective for development was not clear. I believe that the majority of us hoped that the development of our own

organization will be more speedy. On the other hand I believe ,no one in our ranks foresaw during that period the appearance of the CIO with this rapidity and this power. In our perspective we overestimated the possibility of the development of our party at the expense of the Stalinists on one hand, and on the other hand we don't (didn't) see this powerful trade union movement, and the rapid decline of American capitalism. These are two facts which we must reckon with. I can't speak from my own observation but theoretically. The period of 1924 I know only through the experience of our common friend Pepper. He came to me and said that the American proletariat is not a revolutionary class, that the revolutionary class are the farmers and we must turn toward the farmers, not toward the workers. That was the conception of the time. It was a farmers' movement --the farmers who are inclined by their social nature to look for panaceas --populism, FLP'ism--in every crisis. Now we have a movement of tremendous importance--the CIO, some 3,000,000 or more are organized ina new, more militant organization. This organization which began with strikes, big strikes, and also involved with AFL partially in these strikes for a raise in wages, this organization at the first step of its activity runs into the biggest crisis in the US. The perspective for economic strikes is for the next period excluded, given the situation of the growing unemployed ranks, etc. We can look for the possibility that it will put all its weight in the political balance.

The whole objective situation imposed upon the workers as upon the leaders -- upon the leaders in a double sense. On one hand they exploit this tendency for their own authority and on the other they try to break it and not permit it to go ahead of its leaders. The NPLL has this double function. I believe that our policy need not be theoretically revised but it needs to be concretized. In what sense? Are we in favor of the creation of a reformist labor party? No. Are we in favor of a policy which can give to the trade unions the possibility to put its weight upon the balance of

the forces? Yes.

It can become a reformist party -- it depends upon the development. Here comes in the question of program. I mentioned yesterday and I will underline it today -- we must have a program of transitional demands, the most complete of them is a workers' and farmers' government. We are for a party, for an independent party of the toiling masses who will take power in the State. We must concretize it --we are for the creation of factory committees, for workers' control of industry through the factory committees. All these questions are now pending in the air. They speak of technocracy, and put forward the slogan of "production for use". We oppose this charlatan formula and advance the workers' control of production through the factory committees.

Lundberg writes a book, "Sixty Families". The "Analyst" claims that his figures are false. We say, the factory committees should see the books. This program we must develop parallel with the idea of a labor party in the unions, and workers' militia. Otherwise it is an abstraction and an abstraction is a weapon in the hands of the opposing class. The criticism of the Minneapolis comrades is that they have not concretized a program. In this fight we must underline that we are for the bloc of workers and farmers. but not such farmers as Roosevelt. (I do not know whether you noted that in the official ticket he gave his profession as farmer.) We are for a bloc only with the exploited farmers, not exploiter farmers, exploited farmers and agricultural workers. We can become the champions of this movement but on the basis of a concrete program of demands. In Minneapolis the first task should be devoted to statistically show that 10,000 workers have no more vote than 10 intellectuals, or 50 people organized by the Stalinists. Then we have to introduce five or six demands, very concrete, adapted to the mind of the workers and farmers and inculcated into the brain of every comrade, workers, factories' committee and then workers' and farmers' government. That's the genuine sense of the movement.

JPC: Would we propose now that the unions join the NPLL?

Crux: Yes, I believe so. Naturally we must make our first step in such a way as to accumulate experience for practical work, not to engage in abstract formulas, but develop a concrete program of action and demands, in the sense that this transitional program issues from the conditions of capitalist society today but immediately leads over the limits of capitalism. It is not the reformist minimum program, which never included workers' militia, workers' control of production. These demands are transitory because they lead from the capitalist society to the proletarian revolution, a consequence insofar as they become the demands of the masses as the proletarian government. We can't stop only with the day-to-day demands of the proletariat. We must give to the most backward workers some concrete slogan that corresponds to their needs and that leads dialectically to the conquest of power.

SH: How would you motivate the slogan for workers' militia?

Crux: By the fascist movement in Europe --all the situation shows that the blocs of the members of liberals, radicals and the worker's bureaucracy is nothing in comparison with the militarized fascist gang; only workers with military experience can oppose the fascist danger. I believe that in America you have enough scabs, gun-men that you connect the slogan with the local experience; for example by showing the attitude of the police, the state of affairs in Jersey. In this situation immediately say that this gangster-mayor with his gangster policemen should be ousted by the workers' militia. "We wish here the organization of the CIO but in violation of the constitution, we are forbidden this right to organize. If the federal power can not control the mayor, then we the workers must organize for our protection the workers' militia and fight for our rights." Or in

clashes between the AFL and the CIO, we can put forward the slogan for a workers' militia as a necessity to protect our workers' meetings. Especially as opposed to the Stalinist idea of a popular front, and we can point to the result of this popular front --the fate of Spain and the situation in France. Then you can point to the movement of Germany, to the Nazi camps. We must say: You workers in this city will be the first victims of this fascist gang. You must organize, you must be prepared.

JPC: What name would you call such groups?

Crux: You can give it a modest name, workers' militia.

JPC: Defense Committees.

Crux: Yes. It must be discussed with the workers.

JPC: The name is very important. Workers' defense committees can be popularized. Workers' militia is too foreign sounding.

SH: There is not yet in the US the danger of fascism which would bring about the sentiment of such an organization as the workers' militia. The organization of a workers' militia presupposes preparation for the seizure of power. This is not yet on the order of the day in the US.

Crux: Naturally we can conquer power only when we have the majority of the working class, but even in that case the workers' militia would be a small minority. Even in the October Revolution the militia was a small minority. But the question is how to get this small minority which must be organized and armed with the sympathy of the masses. How can we do it? By preparing the mind of the masses, by propaganda. The crisis, the sharpening of class relations, the creation of a workers' party, a labor party signifies immediately, immed-

iately a terrible sharpening of forces. The reaction will be immediately a fascist movement. That is why we must now connect the idea of the labor party with the consequences -- otherwise we will appear only as pacifists with democratic illusions. Then we also have the possibility of spreading the slogans of our transitional program and see the reaction of the masses. We will see what slogans should be selected, what slogans abandoned, but if we give up our slogans before the experience, before seeing the reaction of the masses, then we can never advance.

VRD: I wanted to ask one question about the slogan of workers' access to the secrets of industry. It seems to me that needs to be well thought out and carefully applied or it may lead to difficulties which we have already experienced. As a matter of fact one of the ways of reducing the militancy of the workers is for employers --we had one such case-- to offer to show us the books and prove that they are standing a loss, whether honestly or not is not the question. We have fought against that, saying it is up to you to organize your business;we demand decent working conditions. I wonder what then would be the effect of our slogan of workers' access to the secrets of industry.

Crux: Yes,the capitalists do in two instances, when the situation of the factory is really bad or if they can deceive the workers. But the question must be put from a more general point of view. In the first place you have millions of unemployed and the government claims it can not pay more and the capitalists say that they can not make more contributions. -- we want to have access to the bookkeeping of this society. The control of income should be organized through factory committees. Workers will say: We want our own statisticians who are devoted to the working class. If a branch of industry shows that it is really ruined, then we answer: We propose to expropriate you. We will direct better than you. Why have you no profit?

Because of the chaotic condition of capitalist society. We say: commercial secrets are a conspiracy of the exploiters against the exploited, of the producers against the toilers. In the free era, in the era of competition they claimed they needed secrecy for protection. But now they do not have secrets among themselves but only from society. This transitional demand is also a step for the workers' control of production as the preparatory plan for the direction of industry. Everything must be controlled by the workers who will be the masters of society tomorrow. But to call for conquest of power --that seems to the American workers illegal, fantastic. But if you say: the capitalists refuse to pay for the unemployed and hide their real profits from the State and from the workers by dishonest bookkeeping, the workers will understand that formula. If we say to the farmer: the bank fools you. They have very big profits. And we propose to you that you create farmers' committees to look into the bookkeeping of the bank, every farmer will understand that. We will say: the farmer can trust only himself; let him create committees to control agricultural credits --they will understand that. It presupposes a turbulent mood among the farmers; it can not be accomplished every day. But to introduce this idea into the masses and into our own comrades, that's absolutely necessary immediately.

SH: I believe it is not correct as you say to put forth the slogan of workers' control of production nor the other transitional slogan of workers' militia -- the slogan for the examination of the books of the capitalist class is more appropriate for the present period and can be made popular. As for the other two slogans, it is true that they are transitional slogans, but for that end of the road which is close to the preparation for the seizure of power. Transition implies a road either long or short. Each stage of the road requires its own slogans. For today we could use that of examination of the books of the capitalist class, for tomorrow we would use those of workers' control of

production and workers' militia.

Crux: How can we in such a critical situation as now exists in the whole world, in the US measure the stage of development of the workers' movement? You say it's the beginning and not the end. What's the distance --100, 10, 4, how can you say approximately? In the good old times the Social Democrats would say: Now we have only 10,000 workers, later we'll have 100,000, then a million and then we'll get to the power. World development to them was only an accumulation of quantities: 10,000, 100,000, etc. etc. Now we have an absolutely different situation. We are in a period of declining capitalism, of crises that become more turbulent and terrible and approaching war. During a war the workers learn very quickly. If you say we'll wait and see and then propagate, then we'll be not the vanguard, but the rear-guard. If you ask me: Is it possible that the American workers will conquer power in ten years? I will say, yes, absolutely possible. The explosion of the CIO shows that the basis of the capitalist society is undermined. Workers' militia and workers' control of production are only two sides of the same question. The worker is not a bookkeeper. Then he asks for the books, he wants to change the situation, by control and then by direction. Naturally our advancing slogans depends upon the reaction we meet in the masses. When we see the reaction of the masses, we know what side of the question to emphasize. We will say Roosevelt will help the unemployed by the war industry. But if we workers ran production, we would find another industry, not one for the dead but for the living. This question can become understandable even for an average worker who never participated in a political movement. We underestimate the revolutionary movement in the working masses. We are a small organization, propagandistic, and in such situations are more sceptical than the masses who develop very quickly. At the beginning of 1917 Lenin said that the party is ten times more revolutionary than its Central Committee and the masses a hundred times

more revolutionary than the ranks of the party. There is not in the US a revolutionary situation now. But comrades with very revolutionary ideas in quiet times can become a real brake upon the movement in revolutionary situations -- it happens often. A revolutionary party waits so often and so long for a revolution that it gets used to postpone it.

JPC: You see that phenomenon in strikes --they sweep the country and take the revolutionary party by surprise. Do we put forward this transitional program in the trade unions?

Crux: Yes, we propagandize this program in the trade unions, propose it as the basic program for the labor party. For us it is a transitional program but for them it is the program. Now it's a question of workers' control of production. But you can realize this program only through a workers' and farmers' government. We must make this slogan popular.

JPC: Is this also to be put forward as a transitional program or is this a pseudonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat?

Crux: In our mind it leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat. We say to the workers and farmers: You want Lewis as president --well that depends upon his program. Lewis plus Green plus La Follette as representatives of the farmers? That too depends upon the program. We try to concretize, to make more precise the program, then the workers' and farmers' government signifies a government of the proletariat which leads the farmers.

SH: How do you reconcile this with the original statement that we can not advocate the organization of a reformist labor party? I would like to get clear in my mind what concretely does our comrade do when his trade union is affiliated to the NPLL and he is sent as a delegate to the Labor Party. There the question comes up of what to do

in the elections and it is proposed: "Let us support La Guardia." Concretely how does the matter present itself to our comrades?

Crux: Here we are in a trade union meeting to discuss the affiliation to the NPLL. I will say in the trade union: First, the unification of the unions on a political plan is a progressive step. There is a danger that it will fall into the hands of our enemies. I therefore propose two measures: 1) That we have only workers and farmers as our representatives; that we do not depend on so-called parliamentary friends; 2) That our representatives follow out our program, this program. We then map out concrete plans concerning unemployment, military budget, etc. Then I say, if you propose me as a candidate, you know my program. If you send me as your representative I will fight for this program in the NPLL, in the labor party. When the NPLL makes a decision to vote for La Guardia, I either resign with protest or protest and remain: "I can't vote for La Guardia. I have my mandate." We get large new possibilities for propaganda.

The dissolution of our organization is absolutely excluded. We make absolutely clear that we have our organization, our press, etc., etc. It is a question of the relationship of forces. Comrade Dunne says we can not yet advocate in the unions support for the SWP. Why? Because we are too weak. And we can't say to the workers: Wait till we become more authoritative, more powerful. We must intervene in the movement as it is...

SH: If there were no movement for a labor party and we would be opposed to the creation of one, how does that effect the program itself --it would still be our transitional program. I don't understand when you say we can't advocate a reformist party but we do advocate and become champions of labor party movements for the purpose of imposing the workers' will politically.

Crux: It would be absurd to say that we advocate a reformist party. We can say to the leaders

of the NPLL: "You're making of this movement a purely opportunistic appendage to the Democrats." It's a question of a pedagogical approach. How can we say that we advocate the creation of a reformist party? We say you can not impose your will through a reformist party but only through a revolutionary party? The Stalinists and liberals wish to make of this movement a reformist party but we have our program, we make of this a revolutionary...

JPC: How can you explain a revolutionary labor party? We say: the SWP is the only revolutionary party, has the only revolutionary program. How then can you explain to the workers that also the labor party is a revolutionary party?

Crux: I will not say that the labor party is a revolutionary party, but that we will do everything to make it possible. At every meeting I will say: I am a representative of the SWP. I consider it the only revolutionary party. But I am not a sectarian. You are trying now to create a big workers' party. I will help you but I propose that you consider a program for this party. I make such and such propositions. I begin with this. Under these conditions it would be a big step forward. Why not say openly what is? Without any camouflage, without any diplomacy.

JPC: Up until now the question has always been put abstractly. The question of the program has never been outlined as you have outlined it. The Lovestoneites have always been for a labor party, but they have no program, it's combinations from the top. It seems to me that if we have a program and always point to it...

Crux: First there is the program, and then the statutes that assures the domination of the trade unions as against the individual liberals, petty bourgeois, etc. Otherwise it can become a labor party by social composition, a capitalist party in policy.

JPC: It seems to me that in Minneapolis it's too much an organizational struggle, a struggle for the control of the organization between the Stalinists and us. We have to develop in Minneapolis a programmatic fight against the Stalinists in the FLP, as we yesterday utilized the vote about the Ludlow Amendment.

SH: Now with the imminence of the outbreak of war the labor party can become a trap. And I still can't understand how the labor party can be different from a reformist, purely parliamentary party.

Crux: You put the question too abstractly, naturally it can crystallize into a reformist party and one that will exclude us. But we must be part of the movement. We must say to the Stalinists, Lovestoneites etc.: "We are in favor of a revolutionary party. You are doing everything to make it reformist." But we always point to our program. And we propose our program of transitional demands. As to the war question and the Ludlow Amendment, we'll discuss that tomorrow and I will again show the use of our transitional program in that situation.

Mexico City, April 1938.

Discussion With Crux Upon The Labor Party

Question: In the ranks of our party the question which seems most disputed in relation to accepting the program of transitional demands is that dealing with the labor party in the United States. Some comrades maintain that it is incorrect to advocate the formation of a labor party, holding that there is no evidence to indicate any widespread sentiment for such a party, that if there were such a party in process of formation, or even widespread sentiment then we would meet it with a program

that would give to this movement a revolutionary content -- but in view of the lack of such objective factors this part of the thesis is opportunistic. Could you clarify this point further?

Crux: I believe that it is necessary to remind ourselves of the most elementary facts from the history of the development of the workers' movement in general and the trade unions in particular. In this respect we find different types of development of the working class in different countries. Every country has a specific type of development but we classify them in general.

In Austria and in Russia especially the workers' movement began as a political movement, as a party movement. That was the first step. The Social Democracy in its first stage hoped that the socialist reconstruction of society was near but it happened that capitalism was strong enough to last for a time. A long period of prosperity passed and the Social Democracy was forced to organize trade unions. In such countries as Germany, Austria, and especially in Russia where trade unions were unknown, they were initiated, constructed, and guided by a political party, the Social Democracy.

Another type of development is that disclosed in the Latin countries, in France, and especially in Spain. Here the party movement and the trade union movement are almost independent of one another and under different banners, even to a certain degree antagonistic to one another. The party is a parliamentary machine. The trade unions are to a certain degree in France -- more in Spain -- under the leadership of anarchists.

The third type is provided by Great Britain, the United States, and more or less by the dominions. England is the classic country of trade unions. They began to build trade unions at the end of the 18th century, before the French Revolution, and during the so-called industrial revolution. (In the United States during the rise of the manufacturing system.) In England the working class didn't have its independent party. The trade unions were organizations of the working class, in reality the

organization of the labor aristocrats, the higher strata. In England there was an aristocratic proletariat, at least in its upper strata, because the British bourgeoisie, enjoying almost monopoly control of the world market, could give a small part of the wealth to the working class and so absorb part of the national income. The trade unions were adequate to abstract that from the bourgeoisie. Only after a hundred years did the trade unions begin to build up a political party. This is absolutely contrary to Germany or Austria. There the party awakened the working class and built up the trade unions. In England the trade unions after centuries of existence and struggle were forced to build up a political party.

What were the reasons for this change? It was due to the complete decline of English capitalism which began very sharply. The English party is only a couple of decades old, coming into prominence especially after the World War. What is the reason for this change? It is well known that it was due to the abolishing of England's monopoly control of the world market. It began in the eighties of the 19th century with the competition of Germany and of the United States. The bourgeoisie lost its ability to give the leading strata of the proletariat a privileged position. The trade unions lost the possibility to improve the situation of the workers and they were pushed onto the road of political action because political action is the generalization of economic action. Political action generalizes the needs of the workers and addresses them not to the parts of the bourgeoisie but to the bourgeoisie as a whole organized in the state.

Now in the United States we can say that the characteristic features of English development are presented in even more concentrated form in a shorter period because the whole history of the United States is shorter. Practically, the development of the trade unions in the United States began after the Civil War but these trade unions were very backward even compared with the trade unions of Great Britain. To a great degree they

were mixed trade unions of employers and emrloy-es, not fighting, militant trade unions. They were sectional and tiny. They were based on the craft system not according to industry, and we see that it is only during the last two or three years that the genuine trade unions developed in the United States. This new movement is the CIO.

What is the reason for the appearance of the CIO? It is the decay of American capitalism. In Great Britain the beginning of the decay of the capitalist system forced the existing trade unions to unite into a political party. In the United States the same phenomenon -- the beginning of the decline-- produced only the industrial trade unions, but these trade unions appeared on the scene only in time to meet the new chapter of the decline of capitalism, or --more correct-- we can say that the first crisis of 1929-1933 gave the push and ended in the organization of the CIO. But scarcely organized, the CIO meets the second cris-is, 1937-1938 which continues and deepens.

What does this fact signify? That it was a long time in the United States before the organization of trade unions but now that genuine trade unions exist, they must make the same evolution as the English trade unions. That is, on the basis of declining capital, they are forced to turn to pol-itical action. I believe that this is the most important fact of the whole matter.

The question reads, "There is no evidence to indicate any widespread sentiment for such a party." You will remember that when we discussed this question with other comrades there were some divergences of this question. I can not judge whether sentiment for a labor party exists or not because I have no personal observations or impres-sions, but I do not find it decisive as to what degree the leaders of the trade unions or the rank and file are ready or inclined to build a polit-ical party. It is very difficult to establish ob-jective information. We have no machine to take a referendum. We can measure the mood only by action if the slogan is put on the agenda. But what we can say is that the objective situation is

absolutely decisive. The trade unions as trade unions can have only a defensive activity, losing members and becoming more and more weak as the crisis deepens, creating more and more unemployed. The treasury becomes poorer and poorer, the tasks bigger and bigger while their means smaller and smaller. It is a fact; we can not change it. The trade union bureaucracy becomes more and more disoriented, the rank and file more and more dissatisfied and this dissatisfaction becomes greater and greater the higher were their hopes in the CIO, and especially in view of the unprecedented growth of the CIO --in two or three years 4,000,000 fresh people on the field facing objective handicaps which can not be eliminated by the trade unions. In this situation we must give an answer. If the trade union leaders are not ready for political action we must ask them to develop a new political orientation. If they refuse we denounce them. That is the objective situation.

I say here what I said about the whole program of transitional demands. The problem is not the mood of the masses but the objective situation, and our job is to confront the backward material of the masses with the tasks which are determined by objective facts and not by psychology. The same is absolutely correct for this specific question on the labor party. If the class struggle is not to be crushed, replaced by demoralization, then the movement must find a new channel and this channel is political. That is the fundamental argument in favor of this slogan.

We claim to have Marxism or Scientific Socialism. What does "Scientific Socialism" signify in reality? It signifies that the party which represents this social science, departs, as every science, not from subjective wishes, tendencies, or moods but from objective facts, from the material situation of the different classes and their relationships. Only by this method can we establish demands adequate to the objective situation and only after this can we adapt these demands and slogans to the given mentality of the masses. But to begin with this mentality as the fundamental

fact would signify not a scientific but a conjunctural, demagogic, or adventuristic policy.

One can ask why we didn't foresee this development five, six, seven years ago? Why did we declare during the past period that we were not willing to fight for this slogan of the labor party? The explanation is very simple. We were absolutely sure, we Marxists, the initiators of the American movement for the Fourth International, that world capitalism had entered into a period of decline. That is the period when the working class is objectively educated and moves subjectively, preparing for the social revolution. The direction was the same in the United States, but the question of direction is not sufficient. The other question is the speed of its development; and in this respect, in view of the strength of American capitalism, some of us, and myself among them, imagined that the ability of American capitalism to resist against the destructive inner contradictions would be greater and that for a certain period American capitalism might use the decline of European capital to ~~cover~~ a period of prosperity before its own decline. How long a period? Ten to thirty years one could say? Anyway I personally didn't see that this charp crisis or series of crises would begin in the next period and become deeper and deeper. That is why eight years ago when I discussed this question with American comrades I was very cautious. I was very cautious in my prognosis. My opinion was that we couldn't foresee when the American trade unions would come into a period where they would be forced into political action. If this critical period started in ten to fifteen years, then we, the revolutionary organization, could become a great power directly influencing the trade unions and becoming the leading force. That is why it would be absolutely pedantic, abstract, artificial to proclaim the necessity for the labor party in 1930 and this abstract slogan would be a handicap to our own party. That was at the beginning of the preceding crisis. Then that this period would be followed by a new crisis even more deep with an influence five to

ten times more profound because it is a repetition!

Now we must not reckon by our prognosis of yesterday but by the situation of today. American capitalism is very strong but its contradictions are stronger than capitalism itself. The speed of decline came at American speed and this created a new situation for the new trade unions, the CIO even more than the AFL. In this situation it is worse for the CIO than the AFL because the AFL is more capable of resistance due to its aristocratic base. We must change our program because the objective situation is totally different from our former prognosis.

What does this signify? That we are sure the working class -- the trade unions will adhere to the slogan of the labor party? No, we are not sure that the workers will adhere to the slogan of the labor party. When we begin the fight we can not be sure of being victorious. We can only say that our slogan corresponds to the objective situation and the best elements will understand and the most backward elements who don't understand will be compromised.

In Minneapolis we can not say to the trade unions you should adhere to the Socialist Workers Party. It would be a joke even in Minneapolis. Why? Because the decline of capitalism develops ten --a hundred times faster than the speed of our party. It is a new discrepancy. The necessity of a political party for the workers is given by the objective conditions, but our party is too small with too little authority in order to organize the workers into its own ranks. That is why we must say to the workers, the masses, you must have a party. But we can not say immediately to these masses, you must join our party. In a mass meeting 500 would agree on the need for a labor party, only five agree to join our party, which shows that the slogan of a labor party is an agitational slogan. The second slogan is for the more advanced.

Should we use both slogans or one? I say both. The first, independent labor party, prepares the arena for our party. The first slogan prepares

and helps the workers to advance and prepares the path for our party. That is the sense of our slogan. We say that we will not be satisfied with this abstract slogan which even today is not so abstract as ten years ago because the objective situation is different. It is not concrete enough. We must show to the workers what this party should be, an independent party, not for Roosevelt or La Follette, a machine for the workers themselves. That is why on the field of election it must have its own candidates. ~~Then we must~~ introduce our transitional slogans, not all at once, but as occasion arises, first one and then the other. That is why I see absolutely no justification for not accepting this slogan. I see only a psychological reason. Our comrades in fighting against Lovestoneites wanted our own party and not this abstract party. Now it is disagreeable. Naturally the Stalinists will say we are Fascists, etc. But it is not a principled question; it is a tactical question. To Lovestone it will seem that we lose face before the Lovestoneites, but this is nothing. We orient not according to Lovestone but according to the needs of the working class. I believe that even from the point of view of our competition with the Lovestoneites it is a plus and not a minus. In a meeting against a Lovestoneite I would explain what our position was and why we changed "At that time you Lovestoneites attacked us. Good. Now in this question which was so important to you we have changed our mind. Now what do you have against the Fourth International?" I am sure we will prepare a split in this manner among the Lovestoneites. In this sense I see no obstacles.

Before finishing --a correction in the formulation of the question: The labor party proposal is not a part of the program of transitional demands but is a special motion.

Question: In a trade union does one advocate a "labor party", vote for it?

Crux: Why not? In the case of a trade union where the question comes up, I will get up and say

that the need for a labor party is absolutely proved by all the events. It is proved that economic action is not enough. We need political action. In a union I will say what counts is the content of the labor party, that is why I reserve something to say about the program, but I will vote for it.

Question: The workers seem absolutely apathetic toward a labor party; their leaders are doing nothing and the Stalinists are for Roosevelt.

Crux: But this is characteristic of a certain period where there is no program. Where they don't see the new road. It is absolutely necessary to overcome this apathy. It is absolutely necessary to give a new slogan.

Question: Some comrades have even collected figures tending to prove that the labor party movement is actually declining among the workers.

Crux: There is a major line and then minor oscillations as for example the moods of the CIO. First aggressiveness. Now in the crisis the CIO appears a thousand times more dangerous than before to the capitalists, but the leaders are afraid to break with Roosevelt. The masses wait. They are disoriented, unemployment is increasing. It is possible to prove that the sentiment has decreased since a year ago. Possibly the Stalinist influence adds to this but this is only a secondary oscillation and it is very dangerous to base ourselves upon the secondary oscillations since in a short time the major movement becomes more imperative and this objective necessity will find its subjective expression in the heads of the workers, especially if we help them. The party is a historic instrument to help the workers.

Question: Some of the members who came from the Socialist Party complain that at that time they were for a labor party and were convinced in arguing with the Trotskyists that they were wrong. Now

they must switch back.

Crux: Yes, it is a pedagogical question, but it is a good school for the comrades. Now they can see dialectical development better than before.

Mexico City, May 31 1938.

Conversation With Crux On The Labor Party

Question: What influence can "prosperity", an economic rise of American capitalism in the next period, have upon our activity as based on the transitional program?

Crux: It is very difficult tc answer because it is an equation with many unknown elements, magnitudes. The first question is if a conjunctural improvement is probable in the near future. It is very difficult to answer, especially for a person who does not follow the charts from day to day. As I see from the New York Times, the specialists are very uncertain about the question. In last Sunday's issue of the New York Times, the business index showed a very confused tendency. During the last week there was a loss, two weeks before a rise, and so on.

If you consider the general picture we see that a new crisis has begun, showing an almost vertical line of decline up until January of this year, then the line becomes hesitant--a zigzag line, but with general declining tendency. But the decline during this year is undoubtedly slower than the decline during the nine months of the preceding year.

If we consider the preceding period beginning with the slump of 1929, we see that the crisis lasted almost three and a half years before the upturn began, with some smaller ups and downs, lasting four and a half years -- it was Roosevelt "prosperity". In this way the last cycle was of

eight years, three and a half years of crisis and four and a half years of relative "prosperity", eight years being considered as a normal time for a capitalist cycle.

Now the new crisis began in August,1937, and in nine months has reached the point which was reached in the preceding crisis in two and a half years. It is very difficult to make a prognosis now concerning the time, the point of a new rise. If we consider the new slump from the point of view of its deepness, I repeat, the work of two and a half years is completed by the crisis, yet it has not reached the lowest point of the preceding crisis. If we consider the new crisis from the point of view of time --nine years, or seven, eight years, it would be too early for a new up-movement. That is why I repeat that prognosis is difficult. Is it necessary that the new crisis should reach the same point -- the lowest point -- as the preceding crisis? It is probable, but it is not absolutely sure. What is characteristic of the new cycle is that "prosperity" did not reach the high point of preceding prosperity,but from that we can not make in an abstract manner a conclusion about the nadir. What characterizes the Roosevelt prosperity is the fact that it was a movement mainly of the light industries, not of the building trades, the heavy industries. This made this movement develop in a very limited fashion. That is precisely the reason why the breakdown came so catastrophically, because the new cycle did not have a solid basis of heavy industries, especially of the building trades industries which are characterized by new investments with a long-term perspective and so on.

Now we can theoretically suppose that the new up-movement will include more than building industries --the heavy industries in general -- in view of the fact that despite consumption during the last period the machinery was not renewed sufficiently and now the demand for it will be greater than during the last conjuncture. It is possible it can give a greater, a more solid up-movement than the preceding. It is absolutely not contra-

dictory to our general analysis of a sick, declining capitalism causing greater and greater misery. This theoretical possibility is to a certain degree supported by the military investment in public relief works. It signifies from a large historical point of view that the nation becomes poorer in order to permit better conjunctures today and tomorrow. We can compare such a conjuncture with a tremendous expense to the general organism. It can be considered as possibly a new pre-war conjuncture, but when will it begin? Will the down-movement continue? It is possible --probable. In that sense we will have in the next period not 13 or 14 millions, but 15 millions of unemployed. In this sense all we said about the transitional program will be reinforced in every respect, but we are adopting a hypothesis of a new up-movement in the next few months, in half a year or a year. Such a movement may be inevitable.

To the first question, if such an up-movement can be more favorable to the general perspective before our party, I believe we can answer with a categorical yes, that it would be more favorable for us. There can not be any reason to believe that American capitalism can of itself in the next period become a sound, healthy capitalism, that it can absorb the 13 millions of unemployed. But the question is, if we formulate it in a very simple and arithmetical form --if in the next year or two years the industries absorb 4 millions of workers from the 13 millions unemployed, that will leave 9 million. Would that be favorable from the point of view of the revolutionary movement? I believe we can answer with a categorical yes.

We have a situation in a country -- a very revolutionary situation in a very conservative country --with a subjective backwardness on the part of the mentality of the working class. In such a situation, economic pickups --sharp economic pickups, ups and downs-- from a historical point of view have a secondary character but in the immediate sense have a profound effect on the lives of millions of workers. Today they have a very great importance. Such shake-ups are of a very great rev-

olutionary importance. They shake off their conservativeness; they force them to seek an account of what is happening, what is the perspective. And every such shake-up pushes some stratum of the workers on the revolutionary road.

More concretely, now the American workers are in an impasse -- a blind alley. The big movement, the CIO, has no immediate perspective because it is not guided by a revolutionary party and the difficulties of the CIO are very great. From the other side, the revolutionary elements are too weak in order to give to the movement a sharp turn to the political road. Imagine that during the next period four millions of workers enter the industries. It will not soften the social antagonism --on the contrary. It will sharpen them. If the industries were capable of absorbing the 13 or 11 million of unemployed, then it would signify for a long period a softening of the class struggle, but it can only absorb a part, and the majority will remain unemployed. Every unemployed person sees that the employed have work. He will look for work, and not finding any will enter into the unemployed movement. I believe in this period our slogan of the sliding scale can receive very great popularity; that is, that we ask for work for everybody under decent conditions in a popular form: "We must find work for all, under decent conditions with decent salaries." The first period of a rise --economic rise-- would be very favorable, especially for this slogan. I believe also that the other very important slogan of defense, workers' militia, etc. would also find favorable soil, a base, because through such a limited and uncertain rise --economic rise-- the capitalists become very anxious to have immediate profits and they look with great hostility on the unions which disturb the possibility of new rise in profits. In such conditions I believe that Hague would be imitated on a large scale.

The question of the labor party before the trade unions. Of course the CIO through a new prosperity would have a new possibility of development. In that sense we can suppose that the improvement of

the conjuncture would postpone the question of the labor party. Not that it will lose its whole propagandistic importance, but it will lose its acuteness. We can then prepare the progressive elements to accept this idea and be ready when the new crisis approaches, which will not be long in coming.

I believe that this question of Hagueism has a tremendous importance, and that a new prosperity, a new upturn, would give us greater possibilities. A new upturn will signify that the definite crisis, the definite conflicts are postponed for some years in spite of the sharp conflicts during the rise itself. And we have the greatest interest in winning more time because we are weak and the workers are not prepared in the United States. But even a new upturn will give us a very short time—the disproportion between the mentality and the methods of American workers in the social crisis, this disproportion is terrific. However, I have the impression that we must give some concrete examples of success and not limit ourselves only to giving good theoretical advice. If you take the New Jersey situation, it is a tremendous blow not only to social democracy but to the working class. Hague is just beginning. We also are just beginning, but Hague is a thousand times more powerful...

Of course the question of the labor party can not be considered independent from the general development in the next period. If a new prosperity comes for some time and postpones the question of a labor party, then the question will for some time become more or less academic, but we will continue to prepare the party in order not to lose time when the question again becomes acute, but such a tremendous prosperity is not very probable now and if the economic situation remains as now, then the party can change in a short time. The most important fact we must underline is the total difference in America in connection with a working class from Europe. In Europe, let us say in Germany before Hitler, in Austria, France now, Great Britain, the question of a party for the workers was looked upon as a necessity, it was a common-

place for the vanguard of the working class and for a large stratum of the masses themselves.

In the United States the situation is absolutely different. In France political agitation consists in the attempts of the CP to win the workers, of the SP to win the workers, and every conscious or semi-conscious worker stands before a choice. Should he adhere to the SP or the CP or Radical SP? For the Radical Socialist Party it is not such a problem, since that is mostly for the foremen, but the workers have to choose between the SP and the CP. In the United States the situation is that the working class needs a party -- its own party. It is the first step in political education. We can say that this first step was due five or ten years ago. Yes, theoretically that is so, but insofar as the workers were more or less satisfied by the trade union machinery, and even lived without this machinery, the propaganda in favor of a working class party was more or less theoretical, abstract and coincided with the propaganda of certain centrist and communist groups and so on. Now the situation has changed. It is an objective fact in the sense that the new trade unions created by the workers came to an impasse --a blind alley-- and the only way for workers already organized in trade unions is to join their forces in order to influence legislation, to influence the class struggle. The working class stands before an alternative. Either the trade unions will be dissolved or they will join for political action. That is the objective situation, not created by us, and in this sense the agitation for a working class party becomes now not an abstract but a totally concrete step in progress for the workers organized in the trade unions in the first instance and for those not organized at all. In the second place it is an absolutely concrete task determined by economic and social conditions. It would be absurd for us to say that because the new party issues from the political amalgamation of the trade unions it will of necessity be opportunistic. We will not invite the workers to make this same step in the same way as abroad. Of course if we had any

real choice between a reformist party or a revolutionary party, we would say this is your address (meaning the revolutionary party.) But a party is absolutely necessary. It is the only road for us in this situation. To say that we will fight against opportunism, as of course we will fight today and tomorrow, especially if the working class party had been organized, by blocking a progressive step which can produce opportunism, is a very reactionary policy, and sectarianism is often reactionary because it opposes the necessary action of the working class...

I believe that the most fighting elements in the trade unions should be our youth, who should not oppose our movement to the labor party but go inside the labor party, even a very opportunist labor party. They must be inside. That is their duty. That our young comrades separate the transitional program from the labor party is understandable because the transitional program is an international question, but for the United States they are connected --both questions-- and I believe that some of our young comrades accept the transitional program without good understanding of its meaning, for otherwise the formal separation of it would lose for them all importance.

Mexico City, July 20 1938.

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